

ow's, yet it seemed to the toll-man that he had no more than composed himself to doze away his disappointment before Poet loomed again on his sleepy sight. Now it was not the habit in Zorra to linger over the "speiring." A distant shouting told that Piper was already back to the summer-fallow, and his despatch fell short of the record. To say nothing of Henry McCakeron, who shouted, "Wull ye hae me, Chirstie?" through the McDonald window, then drove on, to return after

fall-wheat threshing, there was Dave Sutherland, who dropped his hoe, walked half a mile, did the trick, and returned while his brother Johnny thinned out a single row of turnips. Yet suspicion colored the toll-man's query.

"Back a'ready? Ye've no'—"

"I have so." Indignation, however, did but leaven his gloom, and the toll-man's pipe—a two-cent clean loss—shivered upon the stoop as Poet added, "I have so-a; but it's her that Rory's to marry."



THE PIONEERS OF MOUND BAYOU

BY HIRAM TONG

Century
Jan 1910

THE negro village and colony of Mound Bayou was discovered in the year 1905 by a Memphis journalist who was at that time questing about the Mississippi Delta in search of advertisements and sensation. Up to the year that the journalist stumbled into Mound Bayou, for twenty-three years the colony had been quietly and thriftily growing amid its corn- and cotton-fields. The journalist's outspoken admiration excited in the Mound Bayouites a wonder at their own achievements. They began to publish monographs advertising themselves, and in the course of time these monographs fell into the wide-spreading hands of Theodore Roosevelt and Andrew Carnegie.

It is presumed that this discreet advertising was duly read; for Mr. Roosevelt, in the last year of his administration, in his speeches and messages on the race problem, went out of his way to approve of Mound Bayou as a visible proof of what

the negro could do in the matter of self-colonization; and Mr. Carnegie, who expresses approval in terms of stone libraries, one morning in January, 1909, tossed into Mound Bayou a library to cost not less than \$10,000. Then Mound Bayou awoke to find itself, if not a famous, at least an approved and duly authenticated, race colony.

THE ROAD TO MOUND BAYOU

BOLIVAR COUNTY, Mississippi, lies in the center of the Yazoo Delta, where the powdery, alluvial soil outstrips in fertility the lands of the Nile and the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, those other granaries of the ancient world. In the heart of Bolivar County are the village and the colony of Mound Bayou. Leaving Memphis, the leisurely south-going train rumbles down the somnolent, fruitful river valley, enters Mississippi at the head of the Delta, traverses De Soto County, then Tunica and Coa-



“WULL YE HAE ME, CHIRSTIE?”

fecklessness yet defeat the manifest intent of Providence?

As there was nothing else for it, the toll-man returned to his chair on the stoop; but both his mental state and the passage of time may be gaged by the fact that, regardless of the cost of shag and matches, he smoked two pipes running before Poet appeared, returning, on the skirts of the woods.

Jeames hailed him at forty rods. “Ye heided him?” And when Poet nodded, he sank back in his chair, satisfied: the potatoes were avenged!

But, drawing nearer, Poet displayed a heaviness that did not sit with a successful suit, and he shook a doleful head at Jeames’s further question, “Ye speired her?”

“Na.” Roosting, like a moulting chicken, on the fence, he proceeded with explanations. “I heided him a’richt to the widow’s cowyard; but just as I was leaping the bars to mak’ the house, I glimpsed Jean’s face, bonny an’ smilin’, like at meeting last Sabbath; an’ seeing that I’d twenty rods’ lead, there was naething to prevent a second’s thinking. The barn,

ye’ll see, was twixt me an’ the road, so I could na’ see Piper—did na’ see him till all of a sudden he brings me a sound clap o’ the back, “Ye’ll congratulate me, Peter?”

Greatness is always best measured by the face it turns to disaster. If Jeames’s visage now put sharp vinegar to shame, if the corners of his mouth ran down till they formed square with his chin, he yet strove manfully to turn grim Circumstance against herself. “‘Congratulate him?’ Ay, after he’s mercifully stricken wi’ blindness.”

There ensued a silence which lasted out the pipe. Then eying Poet, who was still kicking his legs on the fence, Jeames said: “Weel, ye’ve gat an undivided mind at las’. Aff, an’ speir Jean afore she hears o’t!”

Poet sighed. “Ay, that’s a’ that’s laft for’t. But I’m misdoobting but that the widow would ha’ suited better. Yon bank-barn, stabling for forty head—”

“Piper’s,” Jeames grimly interrupted. “Aff!”

From the toll-gate up to Alison’s was a much longer step than down to the wid-

homa, and goes on into Bolivar. On the right run the levees to keep the spring and summer freshets from devastating the land, and beyond them sweeps the "Father of Waters." To the left are the wide, alluvial plains of Mississippi, stretching league on league until they thrust themselves deep into the hardwood forests that fringe the eastern boundaries of the State.

As the train passes through Bolivar County, the visitor observes that the great plantation estates, with their characteristic manorial mansion and clustering covey of negro cabins, have disappeared. He has arrived at a region of small holdings, which are farmed by negro tenants or by independent negro planters. The picturesque white mansions are replaced by dingy cabins or shacks, which squat in the midst of cotton-fields. At times the train runs so near a cabin, skirting in between the cotton, that one may see bare, fat pickaninnies starting up from among the gorgeous tiger-lilies that ubiquitously adorn the cabin yards; and finally in the center of this district of negro farmers, one comes to the town of Mound Bayou.

As the white traveler steps from the train at Mound Bayou, he finds himself the only white man in a village of one thousand blacks. Surrounding the village is a colony of five thousand blacks.

Gradually he perceives that the negroes, loitering about and staring at him with obvious interest, vary from the typical negro of the usual Delta plantation station. The negroes on the platform are not pushing, quarrelsome, or swaggering. Neither do they sport yellow-gaiter shoes and checked trousers, rolled up with an amusing affectation of style and idleness. They are quietly and decently behaved, quietly and decently clothed in a workman's garb. Apparently they are industrious and orderly. Perceiving this, the traveler decides to risk an expedition into the heart of Mound Bayou.

THE TOWN OF MOUND BAYOU

EXTERNALLY Mound Bayou is a commonplace Delta village. It does not differ in essentials from neighboring white towns—from the somnolent Alligator, Malvina, and Shelby to the north of it. Its most obvious topographical features are a de-

cent station, a brick bank building, a park, a lumber-yard near the railroad, and a principal street running out from the station. On each side of this street are strung the frame shops and stores; farther out are the homes of the leading families. Within the town there is a dearth of green trees and turfed lawns; but the streets are graded and fairly well kept, each male citizen being taxed annually three days' road service.

The houses are cottages; in exterior structure they are either crude and bare or tend to cheap, gingerbread ornamentation. An inspection of the interior of the average cottage reveals the occupant's taste for the esthetic realities of red-plush, chromos, and ornate parlör organs. In fact, the black citizen of Mound Bayou insists on the decencies of life and a few of its luxuries. In his home life he has reached the individual tooth-brush stage of civilization. In the village there are several churches, in structure simple, unsteeped affairs, showing little ecclesiastical architecture. The three schools are small frame buildings. Obviously, the color of its citizens is the special distinction of Mound Bayou.

THE COLONY OF MOUND BAYOU

ABOUT the incorporated town of Mound Bayou stretches a district, forty square miles in extent, of farms and timber-lands. This district is known as the colony of Mound Bayou. Five thousand negroes live in the colony, and every acre in its alluvial soil is owned by negroes. The largest part of its acreage is farmed in forty-acre tracts by negro owners; the remaining colony lands are held by village capitalists, who carry on a mild speculation in rural real estate.

In the village a negro may buy a building lot fifty by one hundred and seventy-five feet for from \$85 to \$300 a lot. In the colony he may purchase cleared land at a minimum price of \$35 an acre, or at a maximum price of \$80. A white man cannot secure Mound Bayou real estate at any price. He and his capital are debarred on account of his color. At present, Mr. Carnegie's library represents the only white capital invested in Mound Bayou; and it was a gift, which came after the people had established their own resources.

The agricultural colony is the important fact in the Mound Bayou experiment. It is the most significant evidence that the Southern negro has yet given of his fitness as an independent planter, or of his economic value as a citizen. Strangely enough, in his own colony the negro's shiftlessness, his laziness, his racial ineptitudes, disappear or are reduced to a minimum force. The negroes of Mound Bayou Colony are industrious, painstaking, and shrewd.

On the colony's ten thousand acres of cleared land, its colored farmers raise and market annually five thousand bales of cotton, the sale of which puts into circulation in Mound Bayou \$250,000 yearly. They ship from its uncleared lands large exports in ties and stave lumber. They raise eighty per cent. of the corn and hay the colony consumes, and export to adjacent cotton-oil mills thousands of pounds of cotton-seed. They raise and own enough live stock to farm their lands. In short, they are a group of average Southern negroes who have managed, without white philanthropic subsidy and without outside advice and assistance, to build up a highly successful agricultural community.

"SHARE-CROPPING." AN ECONOMIC PEONAGE

THE negro colonist of Mound Bayou is successful because he is industrially and economically free. In the first place, he buys his land at a low interest from a member of his own race in preference to getting it from the white man at a high interest, or of farming it on a crop-sharing basis. The system of crop-sharing, or, as it is called in Mississippi, "share-cropping," the negro of Mound Bayou avoids as he would a pestilence.

Share-cropping is the planter's economic joke at the Fifteenth Amendment. An ingeniously arranged serf-system, it keeps the negroes in a condition of voluntary servitude on the plantations. In share-cropping the planter furnishes the negro tenant from ten to forty acres of land, a cabin of from one to three rooms, and a mule and a plow. The negro agrees to turn over to the planter half of each crop as a rental for the land and cabin. On a tract of ten acres, five bales of cotton are raised, which sell in the early markets at \$50 a bale. Half of the crop goes to the

negro, netting him, as his year's income, \$125 and his cabin rent. But while he is making the crop, the negro goes to the plantation store, where he buys his meat,—more properly bacon, which he calls "sides,"—his meal, and the other necessities of life on a credit that endures from crop to crop.

By the time the cotton is picked, the negro is in debt at the plantation store for a year's rations and the clothes he and his family wear. At the end of each year, therefore, he must surrender to the planter his entire crop, half of it as rental for the land, the cabin, the mule, and the plow, and the other half to liquidate the debt at the plantation store. On the debt a legal interest is charged, so that generally the share-cropper owes the planter an accumulating residuum of debt and interest, which runs through an indefinite number of years. Under this system the negro finally settles down as a fixture of the soil. Always in debt, yet managing to exist without extraordinary effort or forethought, he becomes contented with his cabin and the daily rations he draws from the plantation store.

The share-cropping system is driving the Southern negro out of his natural agricultural *milieu* to the cities, where in the artisan trades or in factories he is becoming more and more an industrial superfluity. The American negro learns slowly; he does not yet understand the art of mastering his environment; but he is beginning to learn that he prefers a chance-living picked up by thieving or unskilled hands in cities than to remain in a condition of economic peonage on plantations. Like all primitive races, he is instinctively shifting from a rigorous economy to a favorable environment and a satisfactory economy.

The negro colonist of Mound Bayou owns his land, or rents it at standard cash rentals from negroes. He hauls his cotton to the gins of Mound Bayou, stores it in the warehouses, and sells it in the market of Mound Bayou. He buys his fertilizers and his live stock in the town, and his building materials he gets at the Mound Bayou lumber-yard. He purchases his calico, his jeans, and his furniture from the Mound Bayou general emporium. He even reads his news by the week in "The Demonstrator," Mound Bayou's paper. He takes his physic from a negro doctor,

and he gets his new teeth from the Mound Bayou dentist. They are expensive teeth, for his penchant is toward gold crowns and other glittering dentistry. Finally he is buried by a Mound Bayou undertaker.

In brief, the profits of all his transactions go to his race. His industry and thrift contribute to the prosperity of his race, his town, and indirectly to his own welfare. He has become, though he does not know it, a race-builder.

THE THRIVING OF MOUND BAYOU

As a result of their simple economic principle of spending what they get from the soil among their own race, the entire community of Mound Bayou is in a thriving way. Its chief enterprises are four cotton-gins, a sawmill, and a lumber-yard that exports ties and stave lumber. The town's financial center is a bank, which is capitalized at \$25,000. The housing of the bank in a new brick building, fitted out with solid oak tables, plate-glass windows, and brass grills, is a source of civic satisfaction to the heart of every member of the colony. They take one to the bank, as a New Yorker takes one to the Bronx and the Statue of Liberty. There are forty-seven stores and shops in the village. The business of the shops and the cotton industries put into circulation \$600,000 a year; the gross capital invested amounts to \$200,000. At the Yazoo-Mississippi Valley Railroad offices, Mound Bayou's freight bill is \$40,000 a year, its traveling expenses are \$6000, and its express account is annually \$3000. The cashier of the bank informed me that the head of nearly every family in the community owns property either in real estate or shop equipment, and that nearly every family is a depositor in the bank. The astonishing fact about the capitalization of Mound Bayou is that it has been amassed in the last twenty years by negroes who are not above the average negro in education and training, and that their efforts, from the beginning self-initiated, have remained virtually unaided.

Just now Mound Bayou is entering its period of commercial expansion. The citizens tell one that the pioneer days are over and the boom has begun. Mr. Carnegie's gift has stimulated home enterprise. The bank has increased its capital stock from \$10,000 to \$25,000; its deposits amount to

\$30,000. Stock for an oil-mill that will cost \$100,000 has been subscribed, and each week "The Demonstrator" carries the display advertisements of negro capitalists who offer land and money on easy terms to negroes who wish to settle in the colony.

There is talk among the villagers of an electric-light plant, of asphalt sidewalks, of artesian wells, of a new college building, of an agricultural school, which is planned as a training and experiment station for the colony farmers. There is larger talk of the future. The spirit of race-builders has entered the negroes of Mound Bayou.

A RACE MOVEMENT

THE history of Mound Bayou is the account of a definite, deliberate race movement. In 1887, two ex-slaves, Benjamin Green and Isaiah Montgomery, bought from the Yazoo-Mississippi Valley Railroad a plot of its uncleared land in Bolivar County. To Montgomery had come the vision of a race colony which should be from its inception self-governing and self-supporting. At the time that part of Bolivar was an impenetrable forest, through which the railroad had blazed its right of way. The land was for sale at a few dollars an acre, and the tract was five miles from a white settlement. It was the opinion of Montgomery that this wilderness was the territory for a race colony.

Montgomery and Green purchased a tract of eight hundred and forty acres lying on both sides of the railroad, and began selling it in small holdings to negro farmers. The initial difficulty was to attract colonists to the forest, and then to hold them until the land was cleared and they were well started on their farms.

Gradually a number of colonists drifted in. When they brought their families and household goods, they took up tracts of land and remained. Those that came to loaf and to shirk soon vanished from the colony, frightened away by the hard work and the actual hardships facing them. A score of White-Cap victims fled to the colony from the southern counties of the State. These early colonists were confronted by the very real problem of gaining a living until the wilderness retreated and the crops could be raised and sold. And this problem the Mound Bayou colo-

nists met by their own efforts, much as the Western pioneers had done in the wildernesses of Kentucky and Tennessee. They arduously managed to sustain themselves in the forest while they were cultivating the soil and gathering the first crops. But in the place of sallying out of block-houses with small-bore rifles to hunt in order that they might eat, the Mound Bayou negroes took their axes and went out into the uncut forests. During the first three years of the colony they sold \$8780 worth of timber, the cutting of which enabled them to clear their fields for planting. And in the place of planting corn and wheat, they planted cotton, which yielded them two hundred and twenty bales a year. So energetic and thrifty were the colonists that in three years they not only paid for the original tract, but they added to it four thousand acres.

After these critical three years, the colony's permanence was secure. Montgomery's vision of a race colony had been made concrete, and the American negro, on his own initiative, had gone out from the white race, and through his own thrift and endurance had built him a thriving community.

' THE MOUND BAYOU PIONEERS

THE most significant item, therefore, in the Mound Bayou colony venture is its black citizenship. It is the people, and not the village or the colony, that grips your attention. In whatever way you take him, as an economical asset, or a race-type out of its natural environment, the negro of Mound Bayou is worth one's while. When one regards him on his village streets, and in his crude business offices, there flashes into one's mind the idea that he is watching a dozen cycles of race progress concentrated into a decade.

The Mound Bayou negroes are not a hybridization of the African and the Caucasian stocks in America. They are essentially a new efflorescence of the African stock. The maximum amount of white blood in the colony is so slight that Mound Bayou's ultimate success cannot be attributed to Caucasian race qualities. It is an interesting fact that up to the present time the negro who has displayed peculiar abilities has been accounted for by the presence of white blood in his veins. Booker T.

Washington is a result of the mingling of Caucasian and African stocks in America. Any housekeeper in the South will tell you that the "yellow negroes" are cleverer—and more unreliable—than the "black negroes." But the negroes of Mound Bayou are black; five sixths of them are descendants on both sides of African slaves. A comparison of the photograph of Booker T. Washington with those of Isaiah Montgomery and Charles Banks and J. W. Covington, editor of "The Demonstrator," will reveal the racial purity of the Mound Bayou type.

They are an interesting lot, these pioneer negroes. There is old Isaiah Montgomery. They call him in the colony the Hon. Isaiah Montgomery. And why not? He is the Father Abraham of Mound Bayou. Moreover, he is a likable old man, now almost seventy, with a world of reminiscences and half-shrewd precepts to give one for the listening.

There is not a drop of white blood in him. If one saw him outside the honorable atmosphere of his colony, one would consider him a prosperous, well-cared-for old man whose Tuskegee-schooled children insist on dressing him up to the white man's standard. In appearance he is small of stature, with the negro's healthy, satiny black skin, gray-grizzled hair, scant gray-grizzled beard, and protuberant eyes set in baggy lids. His mouth is large, with loquacious lips, and his eyes have the look of shrewd patience.

He was born a slave on Hurricane Plantation, the Mississippi home of Joseph Davis, a brother of Jefferson Davis. To-day he is worth \$60,000. Between these extremes lie many interesting events, for Montgomery has lived in a romantic epoch; but the memorable event of his life was the founding of Mound Bayou colony. Like the sturdy pioneer that he is, Montgomery is proud of his race-building. He likes to recall stories of the first colonists. If one insists, he will even repeat, with pride, the speech that he made the first colonists as they stepped off the train and faced the uncleared wilderness. Nor is it a bad speech, being a sort of stirring Napoleonic harangue.

"Why stagger at the difficulties that confront you?" he tells you that he exclaimed, pointing to the forest. "Have

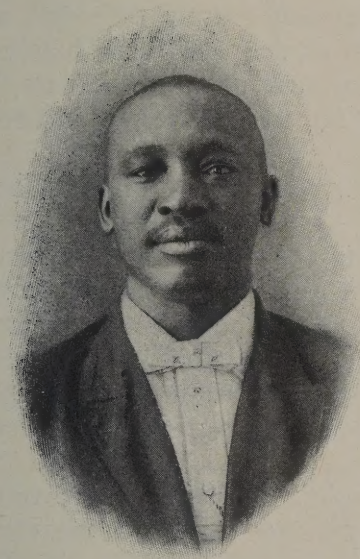
you not for centuries braved the miasma and hewn down forests like these at the behest of a master? Can you not do it for yourselves and your children unto successive generations, that they may worship and develop under their own vine and fig-tree?"

Charles Banks, cashier of the Mound Bayou bank, is another colonist who is an impressive witness to the ability of a pure-blooded negro when placed in a stimulating environment. Banks is of the pure African stock; stands six feet high, is broad of shoulder, and has the litheness of a panther. If one placed him behind a

ing race or personal equality with the white man. In my interviews with the leading men of the colony, they referred to one another as negroes and to the race as the negro race. Not once while I was in Mound Bayou did I hear that high-sounding and salving invention "Afro-American," a term which is in general and exclusive use at negro colleges and universities.

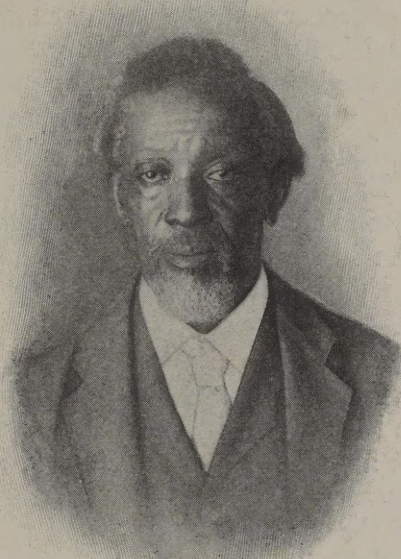
THE WHITE GUEST-CHAMBER AT MOUND BAYOU

OBVIOUSLY there are ways in which the people of Mound Bayou could assert a



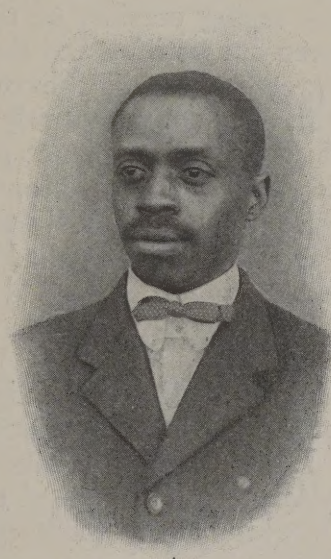
CHARLES BANKS

Cashier of the bank of
Mound Bayou



ISAIAH MONTGOMERY

One of the two founders of
Mound Bayou



J. W. COVINGTON

Editor of "The Demonstrator,"
of Mound Bayou

screen, so that he could not see his color, and listened to his conversation, he would imagine that he was hearing the speech of a college-bred American. Yet he was born of former slaves who were penniless, and whatever schooling he obtained was by his own efforts.

TRAITS OF THE RACE-BUILDERS

AN admirable trait of the Mound Bayou pioneers is their frank acceptance of the fact of their color. They are aware that their ethnological characteristics stamp them, when in competition with another race, as an inferior people, a slave people. They are also aware that a race prejudice is a fundamental antipathy. Consequently, there is no thought in their mind of forc-

brief and local equality with the white visitors whose business relations with the colony render periodic visits necessary. But they do not avail themselves of these opportunities. If a white man wishes to remain in the town over night, he finds that certain rooms in the hotel have been reserved for the exclusive use of Caucasians. His meals are sent to his room. In the home of Isaiah Montgomery a room is similarly set aside for the chance occupancy of more distinguished white visitors.

The Memphis journalist was perhaps one of the first white men to remain all night in the colony. "When I realized," he said, relating the story of his adventure, "that we should be forced to spend the night in Mound Bayou, I wondered what

was to become of us, the only two white people in the colony. I asked Montgomery about sleeping and eating, and he stated that there was a room at his house which had never been occupied except by white people. A—— and myself were taken to his house, and there we met in the hall his wife and two daughters. They had prepared for us a savory supper, which we ate in the regular dining-room by ourselves. Our bedroom was neat, clean, and as nicely furnished as you will find in the average city hotel. After some conversation with Montgomery on his colony and the condition of negro farmers in Mississippi, we retired to our room. The thought occurred to us, while the storm was raging outside, of the difference between our position and the position of two negroes who might have strayed into a town populated entirely by whites, in which negroes were not permitted to live. Here we were at Mound Bayou,—two white people among six thousand negroes,—and our treatment had been irreproachable."

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "ANTI-KINK"

CERTAIN delicate indications, however, are not lacking to prove that the black citizen of Mound Bayou indulges in a longing to conform to the physical characteristics of the white race. Each year the bank of Mound Bayou issues a pictorial calendar. And this year the picture on the calendar is that of a buxom young lady, gowned smartly in street attire. Under the picture runs the legend, "Going Shopping," presumably in the Mound Bayou Emporium. The crux of the matter is the color of the lady. She is clearly African, but she is a highly idealized and de-racialized type, with light chocolate skin, a dash of red on her cheeks, and straight hair—that physical *summum bonum* of the negro. Now, what subtle considerations kept the local artist from selecting and depicting a veracious and accurate type of the negro—a negro woman with shining, satiny black skin, flattened features, and kinky hair?

In each issue "The Demonstrator" carries a display advertisement setting forth the superlative merits of an "Anti-Kink Pomade," guaranteed to straighten one's hair with an alarming rapidity. The incongruity involved in mixing up advertisements of a frivolous and totally inade-

quate "anti-kink pomade" with ambitious race editorials presents a kind of unconscious humor, the only kind that "The Demonstrator" admits, for the pioneer negro of Mound Bayou takes himself and his affairs seriously.

A RACIAL *ESPRIT DE CORPS*

If you talk to an average American negro, you will soon discover that there lurks in the background of his mind a smothered shame of his race *as a race*. The Mound Bayou negro has gone far in overcoming this destructive, race-disintegrating instinct. He not only admits his race, but he sets about improving the breed of it. He is attempting deliberately to create a racial *esprit de corps*. "Racial betterment," "racial progress," "for the race," and "my race," are the expressions oftenest on his lips.

In an interview with the editor of "The Demonstrator," I was rude enough to express a doubt as to the future of the colony after the present generation of founders should have passed. The editor took me to a window, and pointed to the groups of boys and girls who were hurrying past with neatly strapped books thrust under their arms.

"Do you think," he said, "that our boys and girls can go to and from our schools daily and not realize the benefit that comes from the industry and thrift that they see about them?" And then he added significantly: "What chance has the negro boy or girl who lives in the 'nigger quarters' of the cities? They learn to despise their race, and to think that they can never amount to anything, no matter how hard they work or how moral they are. The girls become prostitutes, and the boys gamblers or vicious idlers, at the age when the white boy and girl are still in school, through the idea that they are only 'niggers,' and that what they do does n't count. We are teaching them here that the negro counts."

And then the negro editor pulled out a copy of his paper, and pointed to a speech by a negro bishop.

"You give," the bishop said, addressing a mass-meeting of the stock-holders of the new cotton-seed oil-mill—"you give to every negro that seeks admittance here equal opportunities to get a home, to get a

business, and to get rich, if he can. The organization of this oil-mill will show the youth of our people the things of which we are capable, and will be inspiration to them to become fit for better things."

The oil-mill venture itself is an evidence of Mound Bayou's racial *esprit de corps*. It was Charles Banks, a Mound Bayou negro, who recommended before the convention of "The Negro Business Men's League of Mississippi" the establishment of a manufacturing plant "that would broaden the racial activities, and afford legitimate channels for the encouragement of the mechanical and business development of the negro people."

The league ordered a cotton-seed oil-mill, with the stock placed as low as \$1 a share, in order that every negro in Mississippi might have the chance of investing his savings in the venture. They furthermore ordered the plant located at Mound Bayou, not because a majority of stock-holders are Mound Bayou men, but because the negroes of Mississippi are becoming so homogeneous that they are turning to Mound Bayou as to a racial capital.

In an interview with Charles Banks, I expressed a doubt as to the ultimate stability of an enterprise the stock-holders of which were so numerous, so scattered, and so ignorant of common business principles.

"We have thought all that out," Banks answered, "and we selected the cotton-oil mill industry because our people are cotton-growers; whatever money they make is from handling cotton. Then the demand for cotton-oil, cotton-meal, and hulls is in excess of the supply. Oil-mills are earning from fifteen to forty per cent. We gin our own cotton now, and sell it

through our own cotton-men. Why should n't the negro go further and reap the profit of manufacturing it into by-products?"

And, indeed, why not? The oil-mill is now building. Every now and then they have a mammoth stock-holders' meeting at Mound Bayou, with negro men and women coming from the State, and a special oration, a camp-meeting basket-dinner, and a general good time—all of which has a tonic cohesive effect on the negroes of Mississippi.

MOUND BAYOU SELF-GOVERNED


EVERY town official in Mound Bayou is a negro. The white sheriff of Bolivar County appoints over their district a colored deputy sheriff. After this act he does not officially intrude in the colony. The village marshal, the constable, the mayor, and the three aldermen are elected by the adult males of the village. The village government formally follows the complex organization of a Mississippi town; in reality it is simpler and more communal. When-

ever a question of importance rises, the town assembles in a body, and the matter is decided according to the wishes of the majority. In all town-meetings the women have a full representation.

Such a citizenship meeting was called in 1905, when it was discovered that a number of "blind tigers" were being operated in the village; and the "blind tigers" immediately ceased. Several years ago the whisky party in Mississippi made a sudden dash to repeal the existing local-option prohibition in Bolivar. The success of their attempt hung on the half-dozen franchised voters in Mound Bayou village. It was thought in the village that one or two

J. W. FRANCIS, PRES.
B. H. CRESWELL,
W. T. MONTGOMERY } VICE-PRES.

CHAS. BANKS, CASHIER
WM. M. WARREN, ASST. CASHIER
JAS. B. GARRETT, TELLER



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H. A. GODBOLD
E. W. LAMPTON
A. A. COSEY
H. B. BROWN
T. SWANSON
C. R. STRINGER
I. T. MONTGOMERY

1910				January				1910			
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
LAST Q.	NEW M.	FIRST Q.	FULL M.								
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
JANUARY—FIRST MONTH											

REDUCED FACSIMILE OF THE CALENDAR OF THE BANK OF MOUND BAYOU

The legend under the picture of the old negro giving the boy an object lesson in the relation of cotton bales to thrift reads: "As long as there are mouths to be fed, backs to be clothed, and lands to be tilled, the place of the farmer in the hearts of the American people will be supreme."

of these voters had been corrupted by the whisky interests. A general town-meeting was called, the matter was fully aired, the recalcitrant voters were reprimanded, and the village delegates were instructed to cast their ballots with the county prohibition party, because it was thought that saloons and gin-shops in the county, even though none were permitted in the colony, might demoralize some of the colored residents of the colony.

Society in Mound Bayou is largely approbational and sympathetic in its sanctions. The colony's system of public opinion suggests Western mining-camps in the sixties and seventies. An undesirable citizen is requested to leave the colony, and, if he hesitates, his going is accelerated. In Mound Bayou, however, they proceed about these matters in rather a deliberate and orderly way. On one occasion, a local reformer, statistically inclined, discovered a number of families in the village and the colony in which the expense and formality of a marriage ceremony had been avoided. Mound Bayou was shocked, which is of itself surprising, for the Southern negro is notoriously lax in his marriage relations. A town-meeting was called, and canvassing committees from the churches were appointed to go from house to house and investigate the free-love or the trial-marriage proclivities of its inmates. Forty couples were detected violating the Mississippi marriage law, and the forty were given the alternative of a legal marriage or instantaneous expulsion from the colony.

As in any approbational society, overt criminal acts are relatively rare. Mound Bayou boasts that the deputy sheriff and the constable are the only idle men in the colony. Gambling, the "crap-game," razor-slashing, "pistol-toting," the jug whisky trade, and other peculiarly negro peccadilloes, are not found in Mound Bayou; or, if they exist, they are carefully kept sub rosa.

The negro of Mound Bayou has learned in his colony one important lesson in the art of self-governing, and that is, when he makes a law and imposes it on a community, he himself must stand ready to obey it. But first he makes the law. I asked old Isaiah Montgomery how a community of six thousand blacks, many of whom were illiterate, managed to secure what may be called unanimous good behavior

and a unanimous agreement to all the laws of the colony.

"Our people, both illiterate and educated," he told me, "are behind the laws we pass. They know that each law stands for the sentiment of the community; that it is their law, imposed for their good."

And then I touched a delicate subject. "Are you not afraid that from the whites who surround the colony a party of lawless men may raid your town?"

"The better class of whites in Bolivar know what we are doing here," he told me earnestly. "If a raid was made on Mound Bayou, the sheriff of the county could get enough deputies among the best people in Mississippi to protect us."

"But in the event of a race riot in the State, is it not possible that a determined and bitter attack might be concentrated on the colony?"

"There will never be a race riot in northern Mississippi," Montgomery answered quickly. "Up here our own people are being guided by the wisdom of the best negroes in the State. And the whites understand this. They are trusting us more and more to control and correct our own criminals."

And, later, the white sheriff of Bolivar and the leading planters of Rosedale, the county seat, confirmed Montgomery's statement.

RACE-BUILDING

"Do you think," I asked Montgomery, "that the negroes of the South are capable of self-colonization on the Mound Bayou plan?"

"Why not?" he answered. "We are plain negro men and women, not any better or whiter than other American negroes. What we can do, other negroes can do."

"But will not an effort of the negro to segregate in race-colonies disturb the industrial situation in the cotton-belt?"

Montgomery considered my question. "We are not looking that far ahead," he replied. "A few of our leaders dream of forming a colonization company which will buy up the land of several counties in each Southern State, with, of course, the consent of the State, and locate in them negro colonies similar to Mound Bayou. I do not know whether this is feasible or wise.

"All I hope," he continued, "is that



THE MOUND BAYOU
COTTON-GIN

some plan may be devised by which our young negro men and women may be induced to stay in the country, on the farm, away from the crowded negro quarters of the cities, where they are exposed to industrial and social ruin; and that in the country they may be sensible enough to own their



THE HOME OF CHARLES
BANKS, BANK-CASHIER



THE HOME OF ISAIAH MONTGOMERY, FOUNDER
OF MOUND BAYOU

land and to farm it by improved methods, so that gradually my people will build themselves into a happy and respected race, living under the same laws with your people. Tell your people that the best negroes are not in social or industrial competition with the white man. The equality we want is equality under the civil and criminal laws of the State."

The controlling idea of the Mound Bayou negro

is race-building. And when one regards Mound Bayou, when one looks into the intelligent eyes of its black citizens, one has faith in the Mound Bayou idea. Scattered about the United States, however, are ten million negroes. In Mound Bayou colony there are only six thousand. Is it possible or likely that the ideas and the concrete example of the Mound Bayou pioneers will spread in widening circles of imitation

through ten million negroes? And do these ten million negroes desire race-colonization and racial betterment?

Coming back from Mound Bayou, I sought out a negro butler whom I know, who is a leader in his set and the average type of the Southern city negro. He can read and write, and he makes \$5 per week and his board. His pay-day is every Saturday morning, and often by Sunday evening he is penniless. It would not do to inquire too closely into his amusements. To him I enthusiastically described Mound Bayou. When the story of it was finished, he looked at me a moment earnestly, and said:

"You just could n't hire me to live in that place."

Pressed for a reason, he maintained that he was afraid to live where there were no white men. Who would keep order? Who would protect him in case of danger? Who would guarantee his property—his \$5 per week? The instinct of race-disintegration, of race-shame, had progressed so far in this man that he is literally afraid to live exclusively among the people of his own race, and he is of the average negro intelligence.

Most of us admit the existence of a very actual race problem in the United States. Most of us who live in the South, unless we tend to the extreme of optimism, admit the wisdom of terminating as rapidly as is consistent with political and economic considerations the present inconvenient and artificial juxtaposition of the white and the black races in the Southern States. We have at length abandoned the old sentimental and political regard for "our brother in black," and fortunately we have

dropped in discussing the negro problem such schemes as "extermination," "amalgamation of the races," or "wholesale deportation to Africa."

Hardly less utopian is the plan of establishing somewhere in the West a negro State whose borders shall be the arbitrary limits of the black population of the United States. In the South we are learning every day, as the negro advances to the white man's ambition and capacities, that an arbitrary and artificial segregation means a segregation accomplished and maintained by the bayonet. We are gradually perceiving that if the setting aside of the negroes in colonies of their own is the final solution of our race problem, such colonization can be accomplished only as a result of a movement within the negro population. It must come from a deep, spontaneous desire on the part of the negro to live and increase among the people of his own race.

But is the negro free? If, for example, the ten million negroes in the United States wished to segregate themselves in race colonies in the South or in the West, and were able to accomplish their desire without political disturbance, would we, the white masters of America, permit the separation?

What, then, is the significance of the Mound Bayou negroes and their colony? Are they the pioneers of a new negro race, or are they the inexplicable variants of their race? Shall we consider their colony merely an abortive effort of the individual negro toward the highest racial self-expression, or may we regard it as the frontier settlement of a new negro race?



EXPERIENCE

BY EMMA GHENT CURTIS

BEHOLD yon rough and flinty road
Where youth, now youth no more,
Gropes whining, seeking crumbs of loaves
He cast away of yore.